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OPINION

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COUNTERPOINTS



Mitch
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U.S. senator

EPA is costing Ky. jobs

Kentucky Power, operator of the only coal-burning power plant in the state, recently conceded defeat in a battle waged against them by their own government. The Obama Administration's strategic barrage of regulations provided little choice but to begin telling Kentuckians they may not have work for them at the plant anymore. This concerning news is only the latest consequence of the administration's egregious war on coal.

According to Kentucky Power, President Obama's EPA would have forced upgrades to their plant at a cost of nearly \$1 billion, raising the typical residential customer's monthly electric bill by a whopping 30 percent. At that price, it's no won-

der the plant found the new regulations unworkable.

The EPA may have won this battle, but the losers are the more than 170,000 homes and businesses spread out amongst 20 Eastern Kentucky counties that depend on the Kentucky Power plant for energy.

Since he was sworn in, President Obama has launched a sustained and relentless attack on the coal industry, and therefore at the heart of Kentucky's economy. In fact, he recently released his energy plan—and coal was nowhere to be found in it. The unforgivable result is that more Kentuckians will join the millions of Americans who are already unemployed and looking for work in a weak economy.

I think it's clear that this administration's true goal is not to see the coal industry comply with its unreasonable regulations and red tape—it's to see it driven out of business altogether.

President Obama's EPA has done this by turning the mine-permitting process, which is already burdensome, into a back-door means of shutting down coal mines. They have subjected permit applications to prolonged environmental reviews mired in red tape. By doing so, they are circumventing the will of Congress and the American people.

Coal employs 18,000 people in the Bluegrass State, and another 198,000 Kentucky jobs directly depend on the coal industry. Coal brings in more than \$3.5 billion dollars from out of state and pays more

than one billion dollars in direct wages every year. All of that is at stake in this administration's war on coal.

Thousands of Kentuckians who work in coal mining or have jobs that are dependent on it are in jeopardy. I've heard from farmers, realtors, the transportation industry, and others who also need permits from the EPA to continue their business. Attacking an industry so vital to Kentucky puts people out of work, hinders job growth, and increases energy prices. A former senior EPA official recently summed up the regulatory philosophy of the agency toward those working in the coal business: It wants to "crucify" them.

The Obama Administration's war on coal is costing the people of Kentucky their jobs. The EPA is overreaching its bureaucratic authority and jeopardizing the livelihoods of thousands of Kentucky families who depend on coal mining, and that has to stop.

This president has not fulfilled his pledge to create jobs and right our wrecked economy. Millions of Americans are out of work, and unemployment in Kentucky is higher than the national average. The last thing we need is the EPA's train wreck of rules and regulations hampering job creation even further. It's time for this president to stop accusing Kentucky coal producers of being part of the problem, and to start looking at Kentucky coal producers as part of the solution to our jobs and energy crisis.